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NATIONAL SOBRIETY DISCUSSED

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A PUBLICAN, A CLERGYMAN,
AND A PHYSICIAN.

BY

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

The use of the Dialogue as a means of presenting thoughts upon public affairs is too ancient to be accused of novelty, and too obviously convenient to require lengthy vindication. That it may be perverted into a vehicle of one-sided advocacy of the author's views, and insidious detraction of the opposite sentiments, is very true; but it would be unfair to assert before examination that this abuse is connected with any particular case; and the present writer can truly say that if he had known of any arguments on the contrary side stronger than those adduced, he would have stated them with all the power at his command. This Dialogue, such as it is, he trusts will receive the thoughtful attention which wise and good men are everywhere extending to the question of which it treats.

NATIONAL SOBRIETY DISCUSSED.

Rev. John Loveman.—I have called upon you, Dr. Dogood, to lay before you some plans for the improvement of our parish. I begin to feel more than ever that Christians must *be* as well as *profess* to be, ready to every good word and work; otherwise both the world and our own consciences have reason to censure our neglect. Societies for visiting the poor and sick, day and Sunday schools, we already have; but if I mistake not, we ought to aim more directly at bettering the social manners and circumstances of our people.

Dr. Nathaniel Dogood.—I shall only be too happy to examine your plans. Our neighbour, Barsnare, I expect, will be calling in a few minutes, but I should not be sorry to get him to take part in our operations. Ah! I see by this paper that you have in view the establishment of cheap Evening Classes, also Schools of Industry for the young who have no settled employment; and more than this, I find you are really thinking of opening Refreshment Rooms—a sort of people's Club-houses—where working men may refresh both mind and body without the debasing associations of the public-house. I confess this is a pleasing surprise, as I was unaware that you took such interest in this matter.

Rev. J. L.—Until very recently I did not; but to tell you the truth, on looking round I have felt ashamed at the number of drinking shops in our parish; and a more careful consideration of the subject has convinced me that all our other schemes for benefitting the people will do little in the way of permanent reformation unless we diminish the tippling so lamentably abundant.

Dr. D.—You know I am for giving no quarter to the “English vice,” as it has been too justly called. Our friend, Barsnare, however, will have less sympathy with your projects than I sincerely entertain. Here, indeed, he is—walk in, sir! you are not afraid of our excellent Minister?

Mr. L. S. D. Barsnare.—Not at all; he has a good name, and deserves it. I am sorry to interrupt you, doctor, but I called as you wished in reference to my wife. She is worse, I fear, than when you last saw her.

Dr. D.—I am sorry to hear it. The fact is, she wants more quiet than she gets in your house.

Mr. B.—I know it; the servants say she complains of the noise. I mean that she shall go into the country as soon as she is able to bear the removal.

Dr. D.—That, though an advantage, will not give her the ease of mind she stands in need of. You know she never has taken kindly to your business. She thinks a good deal of the days before you left your farm to enter on “the trade.”

Mr. B.—I did it for the best. A desire to provide for one's family is no sin.

Rev. J. L.—Certainly not; but a lawful desire may often lead to unlawful deeds. With the best of feeling, I heartily wish, Mr. Barsnare, that you were not situated as you are.

Mr. B.—My intentions are good; and, gentlemen, I dislike drunkenness as much as you do. I hate it, and tell everybody I hate it. Why can't people drink what is good for them and then stop? I want no drunkards' money.

Rev. J. L.—We are responsible, my dear sir, not only for our intentions, but also for the results of our actions, provided we have ground for knowing or reasonably suspecting that the results will follow. You dislike drunkenness; but doesn't drunkenness flow from your house, and are you not sure that this will continue so long as your house remains open? You don't want drunkard's money; do you refuse it? I wish to avoid personal reflections; but are you not aware that by frequenting your bar-room not a few have acquired intemperate habits? You served them at first, and you continue to serve them still.

Mr. B.—Why, Mr. Loveman, I never heard you talk after this fashion before.

Rev. J. L.—You are justified in saying so, and I am sorry for it; I ought to have been more faithful. I should explain that it is only lately that I have reflected upon the question with the earnestness and impartiality it deserves.

Dr. D.—And I ought further to inform you, that our Minister is here for the purpose of consulting me about a plan for setting up refreshment rooms where no drink of an intoxicating kind will be sold. You perceive that Mr. L. is going to practice as well as preach.

Mr. B.—Well, I attack nobody, and want nobody to attack me.

Rev. J. L.—Nor am I attacking you, my dear sir, but your trade. Tell me how I can serve you, and I am at your command. As a Minister of religion I should be ashamed to cherish a different spirit.

Mr. B.—I give strict orders that no man shall be served when he is drunk. I try to keep my house respectable, and I think I succeed tolerably well.

Dr. D.—But when is a man drunk? My medical enquiries assure me that intoxication begins much earlier than the public (not to speak of the publican) are willing to suppose. You look at the external signs, but these are only effects of internal changes which have preceded. The brain is first affected, and long before a man is helplessly or evidently drunk, he has become incapable of controlling himself in this indulgence, or in any part of his conduct. You confess, in fact, that you don't interfere till the man is drunk—how, then, can your interference *prevent* the evil? You don't prescribe for your patient till he is in the paroxysm of his disease.

Mr. B.—Of course we can't pretend to tell our customers how much they are to drink so long as they continue sober.

Dr. D.—Or rather so long as they are not visibly intoxicated. When the mare is stolen you lock the stable door. When the house is on fire you are anxious for its safety. Prevention, I see, is no part of your rule of trade.

Mr. B.—I do what I can, and I am proud to say that no house has a better reputation than mine.

Dr. D.—But what if the best reputation be a tarnished and tainted one? Why do men assemble in your house?

Mr. B.—They come to read the news, to chat together, and have a little pleasant intercourse; not to get drunk, depend upon it.

Dr. D.—Not all of them, I dare say; perhaps none. But do they confine themselves to chatting and reading—they drink more or less?

Mr. B.—How else could I live?

Dr. D.—The more they drink the better for you then?

Mr. B.—Just as it is better for every tradesman to sell the most he can of the article he deals in.

Dr. D.—But other tradesmen don't profess to entertain visitors, in order to chat and hear the news; nor if they did would they expect to sell more on that account. But you forget the main point of the

difference, viz., the difference of the articles. Your customers enter sober; do they all—do the most of them, especially if they stay and chat—leave your house *as* sober as when they entered it?

Mr. B.—Not always, I allow; but I can't meddle with such questions. I'm no spy on those who support me.

Dr. D.—Neither do I want you to be; but I do want you to perceive that you cannot sustain the comparison between your trade and such trades as deal in non-intoxicating articles.

Mr. B.—I have as sincere a wish as any other tradesman to earn an honest and respectable livelihood.

Dr. D.—Your wishes I don't question; but the point in debate is, whether you take the right course to realise your wishes? I see daily that the drinking shops of this parish (and I can make no exception in favour of yours) are doing mischief continually; and I can never understand how that can be a respectable business which thrives upon the ruin of health, morality, industry, and domestic comfort.

Rev. J. L.—And to crown all, is, I verily believe, the greatest enemy which religion has to encounter.

Mr. B.—You are hard upon me, gentlemen; but if people choose to abuse good liquor, how am I accountable for that?

Rev. J. L.—But the common sale of it, with the meretricious temptations of a public-house, are a temptation to many.

Mr. B.—Why, then, don't they learn to resist temptation?

Rev. J. L.—That may be a good question for them to consider; but the religion of which I am a Minister, forbids one man to put temptation in the way of another.

Mr. B.—It is not my intention to tempt any one. If they feel my house to be a temptation they are welcome to stay away.

Rev. J. L.—But we have to deal with facts. Drinking shops *are* a temptation in themselves, and if we know that they will prove so, we know that, in having any connection with them, we are tempting our fellow-creatures.

Mr. B.—It's vexing enough, I grant; very surprising that people will be fools enough to drink to excess.

Dr. D.—Not surprising, Mr. Barsnare, that *intoxicating* drinks should *intoxicate*: the wonder would be if they did not. The name they bear is an evidence of what they have done, and a prophecy of what they will do, so long as they are sold and consumed.

Mr. B.—For my part I'm in favour of what I heard a magistrate say, that education will be *the* remedy for drunkenness. It will teach people when they've had enough, and to stop there.

Dr. D.—I never knew publicans to take much interest in questions of education. I'm afraid, Mr. Barsnare, that your zeal will not be infectious. I, too, am in favour of education, and have done something to forward it in this parish. But I know that brain-education will not secure the control of the passions. I can see no reason either why we should *wait* for a remedy which can only be gradually applied, and slowly take effect, when we have an easy and efficient cure at hand; and, more than all, I cannot forget that so long as public-houses are open the people will be receiving an education which must operate against all the moral instruction received elsewhere. It is utopian to expect school teaching, or even wise domestic training, to produce a sober population as long as public-houses and beershops are supported. If you mean that education will cause men to forsake drinking-houses and abandon drinking, I can only say, "Amen" to the prediction.

Mr. B.—I respect you highly, Doctor, but I can't conceive why you should take up so strongly against my trade.

Dr. D.—Because I judge of a tree by its fruits. Now I find that everywhere the sale of drink gives rise to drunkenness, besides encouraging dissipated habits, and that even those engaged in the trade suffer bitterly in some way or other from their pursuit.

Mr. B.—You have known me, Doctor, for some years; tell me how I have suffered from being a publican?

Dr. D.—Why, with my views of your trade I am of the opinion that you have incurred a heavy moral loss by exchanging your last occupation for your present one. Your children, I think, are less advantageously placed.

Mr. B.—I never allow them to mix with the business.

Dr. D.—You do well, and as your friend I wish you had exercised as much consideration for yourself. But, any personal reference apart, I have been struck with two things—first, the great number of publicans and their connexions who are themselves more or less intemperate; and secondly, the greater mortality which prevails among them than among other classes. On the first point I appeal to your own knowledge—how many strictly sober men are to be found in your business in this parish? You entered it late, but how few of those who were trained in it, and to it, have preserved a fair character in this respect? Then again, how many wives and children are bitten by the same curse. And what wonder! That which tempts the buyer may well tempt the seller, and if he yield to temptation, he is never without the means of gratifying his appetite.

Mr. B.—I have always said that men of good principle, and only these, should be allowed to enter the trade. The Beer Bill did great harm by allowing any one to sell malt liquors.

Dr. D.—And why not anyone, if the trade is itself respectable? If it is dangerous to the public—and it is not only dangerous but beyond all reckoning mischievous—what have men of good principle to do with it? And further, if there is personal danger, why should such men be condemned to it by the exclusion of all others? If they act from choice, should not their good principle lead them to avoid it? Men of the best principles out of the trade have been betrayed by drink; what confidence can those in it have, that their business connexion with it will be free from peril to themselves and their relations? I can understand that a man of good principle should be ready and expected to risk much to serve mankind; but it surpasses my comprehension, how such a man should be required to place himself and others in a position of moral insecurity, in order to follow a business productive of injury of every kind.

Mr. B.—You take a severe view of the case: but you said something of extraordinary mortality among members of the trade.

Dr. D.—I did, and I am only sorry that official statistics bear out the natural presumption. The occupations of men above 20 years of age dying have been classified, and it appears that the mortality among the licensed victuallers is more than one-half above the average of the whole, and this holds good of nearly every period of ten years from 25 to 85. The average of all classes is 2 per cent., and of the trade more than three per cent. Account for it as you may, I am truly grieved too see any class of men shortening their own lives, while at the same time their business is diminishing the comforts and undermining the prosperity of other classes, particularly the working population. Yet the evil is not confined to labouring men. I have seen in your house, Mr. Barsnare, with all your care, many young men of family (as the phrase runs), whose prospects are clouded, and I have regretted that you should have been concerned in this change.

Mr. B.—I, indeed! If they had not come to my house they would

have gone to some other. It is really too bad to make *me* responsible for all the faults committed in my house.

Dr. D.—You mistake me—not because committed *in* your house, but through the liquor sold and drunk there. The evil, I am sorry to say, extends far beyond your doors, and much of it will remain, I dread to think, when your house has been swept away and forgotten.

Mr. B.—I am licensed to sell strong drink, and the laws are to blame if anything is wrong.

Dr. D.—If anything is wrong! And if the law is to blame, how does that exculpate the man who voluntarily takes advantage of the law? Human laws are not an infallible standard of right and wrong, and all laws have sanctioned evils which they afterwards forbade, and are still compelled to allow much they cannot be supposed to sanction. But would you abandon the trade if the law did not license, but simply permitted, you to follow it? Are you favourable to abolishing the License system—or would you prefer a Permissive Act as a wiser alternative?

Mr. B.—Is Mr. Loveman friendly to a Permissive Act?

Rev. J. L.—The question has just come before me, and I certainly am well-disposed to such a measure, though I see some difficulties.

Mr. B.—You are not a teetotaler, Mr. Loveman?

Rev. J. L.—Not exactly; but—

Mr. B.—Why, then, should you wish to drink your wine and prevent the poor man enjoying his ale? That is not Christian justice or charity, is it?

Rev. J. L.—Should a Permissive Act be passed and adopted here, I would most cheerfully consent to its being fairly tried. Far be it from me to render it a question of the rich man against the poor man, or of wine against ale. But when I hear any reference to 'enjoyment' in connection with the poor man's beer, I am disposed to ask *how many other enjoyments are sacrificed* in order that this one may be possessed?

Dr. D.—Undoubtedly you are not inconsistent in desiring a law with which you would comply, whatever bearing it would have on your private habits; but it seems to me very desirable for the public mind to be disabused of the opinion that intoxicating drinks are necessary either to the health or to the real comfort of the people. This granted, it follows that the continued use of such liquors by the educated and wealthier classes, will perpetuate this erroneous notion.

Rev. J. L.—There is force in your statement, but you know that what I drink is so little as to render my example more in favour of your excellent society than against it.

Dr. D.—The compliment I can take, my good Sir, but not the conclusion. Human nature being what it is, your example will make against the temperance movement, not tend to its advancement.

Rev. J. L.—Why in truth if all persons drank no more than I do, there could be no need for a temperance movement in the world.

Dr. D.—I must remind you of what you aptly stated to Mr. Barsnare, that we have to deal with facts, and according to these, and not by any hypothetical cases, our conduct should be governed.

Rev. J. L.—I admit—and wherein do I offend?

Dr. D.—Allow me to say that as to example, yours is clearly favourable to drinking and not to abstaining. If all men would drink as little as you do, there might be small need for controversy; but as all men do not and will not, and as a mighty reformation is required, the question to be considered is—how far your example will help or retard that happy revolution? Your example is resolvable into two elements; first, an example to drink *some* alcoholic liquors—this will be imitated; secondly, an example to drink a very small portion only—this will not be imitated;

and it would be a difficult task for you to shew that this part of your example is obligatory on any; for who shall decide whether half as much again as your daily quantity, or twice that amount, may not be taken by this or that person without any conscious injury or danger? Your example is thus favourable to drinking *as a habit*, while the limitation you exhibit is of no practical value to mankind. The world sees the one—it overlooks the other. The Rev. John Loveman uses drink, *that is enough*; how much he uses, is a point it will not concern itself to ask. Each man is to judge for himself, and so we come round to the state of affairs which we equally, and I am sure unaffectedly, lament.

Rev. J. L.—I should indeed be surprised if anyone ever quoted *my* practice as an excuse for using intoxicating drinks.

Mr. B.—Then, I must surprise you, Mr. Loveman, for only yesterday, a discussion was going on in my parlour about teetotalism, and some one having quoted Dr. Dogood as its advocate, another quickly replied, “But the Parson doesn’t patronise it. I’ve heard he can sip his wine, and he allows good ale to his servants. He’s the man for me—none of your water-drinkers turned into skin flints!”—and he actually drank your health there and then. Gentlemen, I wish you a very good day.

Dr. D.—So it is sure to be; the world understands broad distinctions, but not such as may satisfy refined and scholarly minds. And that poor fellow is not alone in his notion. More than one instance has come to my hearing where persons of some social standing have excused themselves from joining the Temperance movement because the parson does not object to a glass of wine.

Rev. J. L.—But these are insincere excuses.

Dr. D.—It may be so. Still they satisfy those who use them. To drink at all is, in short, to keep up the delusion I have referred to, and the practice founded on that delusion; it also deprives the “moderate drinker” of any influence in persuading other persons to abstain; and it likewise affords people in general a self-complacent plea, perpetually used to justify indifference to the Temperance Reform. On these grounds the example of the abstainer is safer and better than that of the most careful user of strong drink.

Rev. J. L.—You do not, I need scarcely ask, sanction the ridiculous assertion that the moderate drinker is worse than the drunkard?

Dr. D.—I never knew anyone who asserted that the moderate drinker is a worse *man* than the drunkard. The meaning is, that the *example* of the sober user of alcohol is more powerful in sustaining the drinking system than that of the sot, and in so being is worse—that is, more productive of evil in the long run—particularly in the case of the young, who are taught to drink almost invariably by moderate drinkers—scarcely ever by degraded drunkards.

Rev. J. L.—I have never opposed teetotalism, but I own that my inclinations have been more in favour of a strict and judicious Temperance.

Dr. D.—Pardon me, my dear Sir, but in saying this you are merely repeating what everyone has been saying, century after century—with what result we at present see.

Rev. J. L.—But the principle, though so extensively violated, may be none the less just and true.

Dr. D.—Assuming it to be theoretically sound, has it not practically failed? If many have kept within, how many have overstepped, that line, which you would denominate strict and judicious Temperance? Not the ignorant and low-lived alone are the transgressors; my professional engagements have admitted me to a knowledge of such ravages by this indulgence, as would appal society, if circumstantially related; and every medical acquaintance I have spoken to about it has

confessed to a similar experience. This effect is owing partly to general custom, partly to special circumstances, and partly to personal temperament; but all enquiry tends to show that prevention is out of the question, unless habits of total abstinence are universally embraced.

Rev. J. L.—What you state contains matter for serious reflection, but it does not impugn what I have just advanced.

Dr. D.—I think it suggests grave doubts whether a distinction between temperance and total abstinence in regard to strong drink is well founded; and this doubt rises into certainty when we remember that temperance, as signifying the government of the animal propensities, frequently involves total abstinence from many things which those propensities desire, especially when habituated to their use. If men only longed for what was in itself *good*, they would require but to restrain themselves from an excessive use; but as *improper objects* are so soon and eagerly relished, temperance prescribes a complete and absolute separation from them. You admit this is the case of opium and other drugs—why do you not admit it in the case of alcoholic liquors?

Rev. J. L.—All who use them are not influenced by an appetite for them.

Dr. D.—Perhaps not wholly by a taste for their alcoholic quality; the flavour of other ingredients may often have considerable attraction; but as the alcoholic element is generally the chief ground of preference, and as it is always the most active principle contained (except where the adulteration is very pernicious), the same conclusion is arrived at—that temperance prohibits, and not permits, the use of articles always useless, often injurious, peculiarly dangerous, and a fondness for which is easily formed, and when formed, is ruinous in its effects. I am greatly mistaken if a ‘strict and judicious temperance’ does not forbid its disciples to tamper with such drinks.

Rev. J. L.—Yet it is by the resistance of temptation that virtuous principles are strengthened, and the soul passes onwards from a militant to a triumphant state.

Dr. D.—Very true; but if temptation is to be resisted it must not be *created*. One of the conditions of success in the struggle against it is, that it exists contrary to our wishes; otherwise it is not temptation, but sin. In reference to our fellow-creatures, we feel it of the first importance to diminish incentives to wrong-doing; and every Christian would shrink with horror from calling these into being, or keeping them in existence, in order to test the virtue of his neighbours. Would you advise the increase of drinking-shops with such a view? And it is to be remembered that drink is not only one of the greatest temptations to thousands upon thousands, but in becoming so adds aggravated intensity to other kinds of temptation. Nor must I omit to draw your attention to the singularity attending temptation from this source—that in proportion as the temptation strengthens, so *the mind's inherent power of apprehending and resisting it is weakened*, and the temptation is never fully successful until the soul, with all its noblest faculties, lies prostrate and paralysed before the tempter. No other form of temptation resembles this, except where similar substances are used, so that if it were a fault to expose oneself or others to temptations, say to gamble or to steal, it is a far greater fault to do the same in reference to indulgence in drink.

Rev. J. L.—But drink is by no means a temptation to all.

Dr. D.—Certainly not to all, but in various degrees to *most*. With the generality of men, its use *tends* to evil; and an evil tendency should be abjured as much as an “appearance of evil.” Where it is no temptation, however, there can be no effect in the confirmation of virtuous principle; while you will agree with me, that it is binding upon every

Christian, and, if possible, more imperatively binding on every Christian minister, to avoid doing what may tempt others, though he himself should escape. But our drinking system is one huge accumulation of insidious temptations, and should, therefore, receive no countenance from hearts inspired with the Saviour's love for the brotherhood of man.

Rev. J. L.—I admit the manifold evils of the traffic, and am prepared to go a long way in the application of legislative antidotes; nor do I grudge the admission, that the common use of strong drink is productive of serious and deplorable results; but you seem to assume that intoxicating liquors are of no benefit whenever, or by whomever, taken.

Dr. D.—I have not insinuated such a proposition, neither is it needful that I should. On the lowest ground—far lower than teetotalers are perhaps warranted to take—an impregnable argument can be raised; for until it is shown that the good these liquors produce is greater in amount and higher in kind than the evil they effect—in short, that they are worth more than they cost, Reason and Religion cannot fix upon them the sign-manual of their approval. This position is wholly unassailable. We may, indeed, go much further, and contend that, leaving out of question their medicinal properties, alcoholic beverages, however moderately consumed, rather injure than benefit both mind and body.

Rev. J. L.—There you have the opinions, if not the experience, of all nations and ages against you.

Dr. D.—You do well to qualify the declaration; but even so qualified I cannot assent to it. Abstinence from intoxicants has been the rule of vast populations, as the Hindoos and all Mohammedan nations; by other communities for particular reasons, as the Israelites in the wilderness; by classes of men, as the Nazarites, the Rechabites, and the competitors in the Grecian games; by individuals of the greatest strength and wisdom, avowedly for their personal advantage, as Samson, Daniel, and many others on sacred and secular record. As to Samson, the example is extremely cogent, since his mother, by Divine direction, was placed under the same dietetic regulation from the period of the angelic message to that of Samson's birth. The experience of millions of abstainers in all climates within the last forty years, has tended to the same conclusion. Experiments purposely made to test the point, as in India with soldiers, divided into teetotalers, moderate drinkers, and drunkards, have added corroborative evidence to the superiority of abstinence. It is also no insignificant token in its favour, that Insurance Offices give an eager preference to teetotalers over others. Most striking of all is the fact, that the Temperance and General Provident Institution, in which abstainers and picked moderate drinkers are entered in different sections, has declared three bonuses, and that each time the bonus of the temperance section has exceeded the bonus of the other section by from 12 to 15 per cent. Physiological research has likewise contributed its testimony to the benefit of *no-drinking* over *any-drinking*. Analyse ardent spirits, and what do we find?

Rev. J. L.—I agree with Dr. Silvertone, that "there is no more nourishment in spirits than in a flash of lightning."

Dr. D.—And what in fermented liquors? A portion so inconsiderable that it is not worth one-twentieth its money value, while in producing it, seven-tenths of the precious grain employed is wasted, amounting in our country alone, in the aggregate, to 50 millions of bushels yearly. If we knowingly encourage such improvidence, how can we escape the curse pronounced in Scripture on the man that "withholdeth corn from the people?" With the food thus destroyed millions of persons could be fed; but abandoned to the distiller and brewer, it enters into their hands solid aliment, and returns as diluted poison; it ceases to be a Divine

bounty and re-appears as the bait of the devil. In such a metamorphosis is it fit for any Christian man to take a part, either as principal or accessory? The first medical certificate procured by Mr. Jeffreys, and the second by Mr. Dunlop, each signed by the first names in the profession, refer to the supposed excellence of strong drinks as an antiquated fallacy, and to their use as a great cause of disease and almost every other evil which afflicts the world.

Rev. J. L.—Still you have not all the great names, nor the great organs of scientific opinion, on your side.

Dr. D.—This much may be said, however, that no scientific objection has been brought against the total abstinence system which has not been fully refuted. Whether alcohol is in fact burnt in the body and so produces heat, or whether it is ejected by the excretory organs unchanged, as some of the most eminent French and English authorities contend, two things are most evident—*first*, that it is destitute of all nutritive power; and *secondly*, that its *specific* effect on the blood and nervous system is distinctly poisonous, although, of course, the individual and ultimate results vary, as in the case of all poisons, with the method and amount of its consumption.

Rev. J. L.—On these points, Doctor, I want to be a learner; but do you not in so absolutely condemning the use of all intoxicating beverages, reflect upon Him who created the Vine and supplied it with that juice which we are told is cheering to God and man?

Dr. D.—Suffer me to ask whether this mode of speaking does not confound the Divine *intention* with the Divine *act* of creation? God has made many herbs and plants which no sane man would consider ought to be eaten because they exist. All things have their uses, but *what* those uses are we must judge by observing their effects. Every creature of God is good *for a good end*. Grapes are good in their solid form, either fresh or preserved; and so grape-juice is good until its elements are changed by fermentation (which I beg to remind you is a process of decay), giving birth to a spirit the most potent for mischief the world has ever known.

Rev. J. L.—You will not deny that in the Bible reference is frequently made in terms of approbation to intoxicating drinks.

Dr. D.—I have no desire to enter into what is called the Scripture wine question; but since you have broached it, I beg your candid attention to a few observations on that topic. First, in my opinion, the Scriptures were never designed to instruct us in things relating to diet, nor do the sacred writers ever profess to be infallible in their acquaintance with such points. They write with no pretence to scientific accuracy, and we have no more right to suppose that they meant to teach us anything about alcohol, than that they wished to be considered professors of arts imperfectly or not at all understood in the times when they wrote. Secondly—We must distinguish between a Divine permission and a Divine approval. Thirdly—Where an inspired sanction is supposed to attach to the use of wine, is it not more reasonable and reverential to apply that sanction to an article which could do no harm rather than to one productive of unbounded mischief? Now it can be easily shown that the ancients used unfermented and also intoxicating wines, but there is no more evidence that the Spirit of God approved of wine made intoxicating by alcohol than that the same approval was extended to wines made intoxicating by the most inflammatory and deadly drugs. I cannot say how it may be with you and other good men, but my reverence for the Holy Book leads me to look with great suspicion on all appeals to it for the purpose of sanctioning an indulgence which is of no good to anyone, and leads vast multitudes into the jaws of ruin. Would that we were

more diligent to search it in order to feed our zeal, and strengthen our endeavours, for the relief of a sinful and suffering world. With regard to the use of wine by the ancients, we know that the weakest were in most esteem, except by drunkards, and that the weakest were diluted with water. Both physically and morally, therefore, the temperate drinker stood in little more danger, and received little more injury, than we should do in using table and ginger-beer. Were it even proved, which it never has been, that wine, so alcoholically weak, was used by the Saviour and his apostles, nothing is gained in favour of using liquors very much stronger, and under such circumstances when that use is prolific of the most appalling results. On the contrary, recognising the principles of action which the Redeemer and his apostles announced and enforced, can we fail to perceive that our course of duty lies in direct opposition to the public and private, the dietetic and festal, use of all inebriating drinks?

Rev. J. L.—That your system has an *ascetic* complexion you will not refuse to admit. John the Baptist is your favourite type, and he was the grand ascetic of his age.

Dr. D.—But so far as his abstinence from wine was concerned, did he not act under Heaven's immediate command? And as to mortification of the flesh, is Jeremiah's description of the Nazarites the portrait *you* would draw of an ascetic? "Purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy in body than rubies, whose polishing is of sapphire." Do such traits enter into your idea of self-afflicting and pale-faced asceticism? There seems a strange misconception of self-denial among many Christians. They appear to regard John as superior to the Saviour in this respect; but such an opinion must be totally false. The difference was this—John's self-denial had exclusive reference to the performance of his official work; while Jesus, in *His* self-denial (which infinitely exceeded the Baptist's) had exclusive reference to the good of others. An imitation of John's example is, therefore, of comparatively inferior moral dignity and worth; but Christ's example of self-denial is as universal as humanity, and as authoritative as the will of God. If, then, John, to execute his official work, practised such self-denial, how much more should the disciples of Jesus practise equal, or greater, self-denial in imitation of his Lord, and to carry out his Lord's designs of beneficence and mercy? In three senses out of four, abstinence from strong drink is not self-denial, but self-gratification; and if, in the fourth respect, it is self-denial (either in the way of restraining appetite or displeasing others) can the sacrifice be refused when demanded by reasons so weighty, and ends so exalted? Thus, a man who abstains from motives of personal benefit may be said to follow the Baptist, and wisely too; but if he abstains from motives of philanthropy and piety, he follows in the footsteps of that greater than the Baptist, who gave "His life a ransom for many." How grossly is the example of our Lord perverted when cited in order to evade even the shadow of that self-denial which, in its most glorious and awful fulness, He cheerfully presented. In my soul I wish, that not only private Christians, but Christian ministers, and some of deserved note and influence, were exceptions to this conduct rather than participators in it. Is it more light that is required, or what?

Rev. J. L.—Perhaps more forbearance on the part of your friends; abstinence from an intoxicating spirit and intemperate speech.

Dr. D.—We might dismiss this charge by the commonplace verdict that there is fault on both sides. I can safely say that I have heard as much violent language *against* teetotalers as *from* them; and the complaint of intemperate speech by your friends is not merely exaggerated, and often a matter of report, but is wholly without pertinence to the point in hand; for why should the wildest talk of teetotalers

prevent any man abstaining, recommending the practice, and using all means in his power to gain converts to the *plan*? If ministers object to joining existing Temperance associations—by whom they would be respectfully and cordially received—they can form societies of their own in connection with their parishes and congregations. Why should not Mr. Loveman be one to make the trial?

Rev. J. L.—Are we not justified in believing that the Gospel is able to subdue all the diversified forms which sin may take? and sorry should I be to do aught that would seem to discredit the omnipotent efficacy of the grace of God.

Dr. D.—And not less deeply should I deplore any movement which should have the semblance of derogating from the all-sufficiency of our Divine religion to renew every heart and save every sinner. But the Gospel to be believed must be heard and understood; and in this respect teetotalism is a means of fitting men to hear, and of increasing the number of the hearers. Where it operates we see none of the mad or maudlin inebriation, or of the narcotic influence, which even moderate potations often exert, and thus it acts as a valuable auxiliary—a schoolmaster, like the law, to bring men to Christ. In adopting such an auxiliary, how can the Christian minister fear that he is reflecting on the Divine message he is commissioned to proclaim?

Rev. J. L.—Is there not a danger that Teetotalers may plume themselves on their position, and be less anxious to receive the Word of Life?

Dr. D.—Teetotalism simply makes a man completely and securely sober, and if he overrate that negative virtue it is only what he may do with any other. In fact, Teetotalism is one branch of that system of social education which carries with it important advantages, and which, as its crowning and consecrating merit, assists the pastor and Sunday-school teacher in their endeavours to direct the minds of their charge to the saving truths of the Christian faith. Opposition, competition, there cannot be; and there would be small fear of the perversion of an instrumentality so excellent, if Christian people and Christian ministers, adopting it with a ready mind, were to avail themselves of it for the great ends for which they profess so much concern. A missionary does not cease to magnify his office because he travels to his post by steam, or because on reaching it, he establishes schools to instruct the ignorant. Whatever are means to his great end he seizes upon as such; and if the universal adoption of total abstinence would contribute to the spread of religion—if it would prepare those who now hear the Gospel for understanding it better, and prepare myriads who never hear it for hearing it at all,—how incumbent is the duty of the Christian church of bearing a testimony and exhibiting a line of action in accordance therewith.

Rev. J. L.—You specified the want of information as one reason for the indifference shown.

Dr. D.—I did; and yet it would be difficult to say whether ignorance and error have given rise to the indifference, or the indifference to the ignorance and error. If the church did but feel a warm desire to help on religion by the removal and prevention of drunkenness, enquiry would succeed, and enquiry could only terminate, I think, in a cordial espousal of the Temperance plan—a plan so simple that a child can see its fitness and predict its efficiency, while an archangel cannot estimate the variety and immensity of the results that would follow its general adoption. What we want is *personal and immediate co-operation*.

Rev. J. L.—You are receiving this more than ever, I believe.

Dr. D.—Yet how slowly and partially. If, 30 years ago, every minister, and officer, and member of every Christian congregation had

done this one thing, would not the state of society have been sounder and the prospects of Christianity brighter than they are? It is as easy—indeed easier and less expensive to abstain than to drink; yet the church has been patronising the system of drinking for many ages: why, for one generation, should not a trial of the Abstinence system be granted? Should we have, think you, more crime, more immorality, more depravity, than now? Should we have smaller Sunday-schools and Christian assemblies? Had every professing Christian for the last 30 years been an abstainer who can doubt that our country and humanity would have been improved and blest? and is it for the church still longer to withhold that blessing, and still longer to detain from the house of prayer the multitudes who would flock into it if those who fear God would put from them the drunkard-making cup? The loss of a third of a century cannot be repaired—oh, would that it were not increased!

Rev. J. L.—You direct all the force of your remarks towards the church.

Dr. D.—Not all, but much; and wherefore not? It is only the church that can turn Teetotalism to the *best* account; first by inducing the world to embrace it, and then by turning the influence so acquired to Christian uses. At any rate, my friend, let us have your aid in this parish. You have no appetite for drink, I can well believe. You can resign your single glass with advantage, certainly with no loss I assure you. Come with us, and whether we do you good or not, you will do us good, and both as a man and a Christian minister you will find a joyful reward in the promotion of the Temperance Reformation by your labours and your prayers.